

### Introducing the Mosaic of Integration Theory

Diez, Thomas; Wiener, Antje

Erstveröffentlichung / Primary Publication

Arbeitspapier / working paper

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Diez, T., & Wiener, A. (2018). *Introducing the Mosaic of Integration Theory*. (KFG Working Paper Series, 88). Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, FB Politik- und Sozialwissenschaften, Otto-Suhr-Institut für Politikwissenschaft Kolleg-Forschergruppe "The Transformative Power of Europe". <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-57752-1>

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WORKING PAPER

**KFG**  
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# Introducing the Mosaic of Integration Theory

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Thomas Diez and Antje Wiener

No. 88 | May 2018



Freie Universität



Berlin

**KFG Working Paper Series**

**Edited by the Kolleg-Forschergruppe "The Transformative Power of Europe"**

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Diez, Thomas/Wiener, Antje 2018: Introducing the Mosaic of Integration Theory, KFG Working Paper Series, No. 88, May 2018, Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) "The Transformative Power of Europe", Freie Universität Berlin.

ISSN 1868-6834 (Print)

ISSN 1868-7601 (Internet)

This publication has been funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Freie Universität Berlin

Kolleg-Forschergruppe

"The Transformative Power of Europe:

The European Union and the Diffusion of Ideas"

Uhnenstr. 26

14195 Berlin

Germany

Phone: +49 (0)30- 838 57033

Fax: +49 (0)30- 838 57096

[transform-europe@fu-berlin.de](mailto:transform-europe@fu-berlin.de)

[www.transformeurope.eu](http://www.transformeurope.eu)



# INTRODUCING THE MOSAIC OF INTEGRATION THEORY<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Diez and Antje Wiener

## Abstract

This introductory chapter of the third edition of *European Integration Theory* (OUP 2018) addresses the rationale for a book on European integration theory and introduces the contributions to the book. It begins by addressing the question of Why Study Integration Theory; it then defines the terms ‘integration’ and ‘theory’ and introduces the ‘mosaic of European integration theory’ as the book’s central concept. The chapter also offers an overview of European integration as a process which has been studied for several decades now. To that end, the chapter recalls distinct phases of integration and the respective parts of the mosaic which have been developed to understand and explain them based on descriptive, analytical and constructive theorising. Each phase is distinguished by historical context, leading questions and relevant theoretical reference points. The book’s extensive section on Studying European Integration by taking account of ‘contexts of theoretical development’ and addressing the question of ‘competing or complementary theoretical approaches’ which also identifies the functions and areas of theory. In concluding, the chapter details the concept of the ‘Mosaic of Integration Theory’ and introduces the chapter structure of the book’s contributions.

## The Authors



**Thomas Diez** is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Tübingen. From 1997 to 2000, he was Research Fellow at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute and subsequently, from 2000 to 2009, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and then Professor of International Relations and Head of Department at the University of Birmingham. Among his publications are *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution* (co-editor, Palgrave 2017), *The Securitisation of Climate Change* (co-author, Palgrave, 2016), and *A Different Kind of Power? The EU’s Role in International Politics* (editor, IDebate Press, 2014). In September 2009, he received the Anna Lindh Award for his contribution to the field of European Foreign and Security Policy Studies. Thomas was President of the European International Studies Association (EISA) 2015-7.

**Antje Wiener** (PhD Carl 1996, MA FUB 1989) has held the Chair of Political Science, especially Global Governance at the University of Hamburg since 2009. She has been elected as By-Fellow of Hughes Hall, Cambridge and has been a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in the UK since 2011. In 2015, she was awarded an Opus Magnum Fellowship of the Volkswagen Foundation for research on the *Constitution and Contestation of Norms in Global International Relations*; the book is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press in August 2018. Previous book publications include *‘European’ Citizenship Practice: Building Institutions of a Non-State* (Westview 1998), *The Invisible Constitution of Politics: Contested Norms and International Encounters* (CUP 2008) and *A Theory of Contestation* (Springer 2014).



<sup>1</sup> This Working Paper will be published as: Diez, Thomas/Wiener, Antje forthcoming: *Introducing the Mosaic of Intergration Theory*, in: Wiener, Antje/Börzel, Tanja A./Risse, Thomas (eds): *European Integration Theory*, 3rd Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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## 1. The Relevance of Integration Theory

### *The Dual Purpose of this Book*<sup>1</sup>

There is surely no shortage of books on European integration. This is a booming field, and readers will know better than anyone else the difficulties in choosing the appropriate literature. But it is all the more surprising then that very few of these books are dedicated to the theory of European integration, especially when it comes to introductions and overviews. Most of them deal with the history of the integration process and its main actors, with the European Union's formal institutions and particular policies, or with present and future member states' policies, and barely spare a chapter on theoretical perspectives. This is not to say that there is no work done on integration theory. Indeed, this is in many respects a vibrant field that has overcome the impasses of the past. Yet, except for a few notable exceptions that we will return to in the course of this introduction (above all, Rosamond 2000; Jørgensen et al. 2007, and in German Bieling/Lerch 2005), concise overviews of the field of integration theory remain rare.<sup>2</sup>

This is therefore what we set out to do in this book: first, to provide an introduction to integration theory, its various approaches and how they have developed, to those who have started to study European integration, and are interested (as, we argue below, anyone studying European integration should be) in the theories of their field; second, to provide an overview of the field and take stock of its achievements to date, but also its problems, for those who are involved in the development of European integration theory, and who want to make sense of the sometimes confusing array of approaches that have been proliferating since the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, we suggest that as the European integration process has progressed, its analyses have moved away from being predominantly concerned with either providing a normative template for a future European polity or with explaining the integration process within a social scientific framework grounded in International Relations (IR) Theory. Increasingly, scholars have turned to or incorporated a more critical or "problematizing" approach, therefore reflecting both concerns with the integration process and developments in IR Theory since the 1980s, while others have treated the European Union (EU) as a political system that faces general problems of governance and therefore should not solely be treated as the exception to international politics that needs explaining. Neither of these developments means that IR as a discipline has become irrelevant to the analysis of European integration, and it in many ways continues to structure the major debates, but the field as a whole has certainly become a lot more varied.

To this end, we have invited eminent scholars who have contributed significantly to the development of

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1 Given this paper's popular argument to introduce European integration theory as a 'mosaic' rather than a set of competing grand theories, the original text of this paper has been kept, except for revisions to add updated references to the literature, as well as to include the changed substantive focus on the issue of 'crisis' instead of 'enlargement' and introduce the contributions to this 3rd edition.

2 Remarkably, this observation stands, even in 2017 when this introductory chapter has been revised for the 3rd edition of the book.

3. The previous edition (Wiener/Diez 2009) was a revised and amended version of the introduction chapter to the first edition to this volume. It benefitted from a number of reviewers' comments. Thus, previous versions of the original chapter were presented at the 1st Pan-European Conference on European Union Politics in Bordeaux, September 2002, the Biennial Convention of the European Union Studies Association in Nashville, March 2003 and at seminars at Koç, Sabancı, and Boğaziçi Universities Istanbul. We are grateful to Knud Erik Jørgensen, Daniel Wincott, the co-panellists and audiences, and our students in Belfast and Birmingham.

a particular theoretical approach, to take part in this “stock-taking”. We have asked them to reflect upon the development, achievements, and problems of “their” approach according to a set pattern, which we will introduce below and which will allow for comparing and relating individual approaches to each other. In this introduction, we want first to make the case for the relevance of theory when studying European integration, which will be our concern in the remainder of this first section. The second section then proceeds to give a broad overview of the phases of theorizing European integration, thereby surveying the theoretical approaches that we have included in this volume and providing our rationale for this particular selection. The third section introduces the comparative framework that provided the guide for the chapters. This will include a discussion of the nature of the relationships between theories, a theme that we return to in the conclusion of this book. Finally, building on this discussion, the last section introduces the pattern of each chapter and provides an overview of the book.

We should add that the process of stocktaking would make no sense if it did not lead to the further development of theory. To that extent, we would not want to see this book read purely to understand and replicate existing theories, but rather as the starting point for criticizing and reformulating existing approaches, bringing them together in novel ways, and to move beyond them. And we would like to see both colleagues and students involved in this project—it is probably fair to say that without the critical engagement of their students, none of the authors of this book could have made the contribution they did to European integration theory.

## **2. What is Integration Theory?**

In order to talk meaningfully about integration theory, its two constitutive terms “integration” and “theory” need to be defined. This is less straightforward than it may at first seem, since both terms are heavily contested.

Let us turn to integration first. Ernst Haas, one of the most influential neofunctionalist integration theorists (see also Niemann et al. forthcoming), once defined integration as the process ‘whereby political actors in several, distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states’ (Haas 1958: 16). This is a broad definition, which includes both a social process (the shifting of loyalties) and a political process (the construction of new political institutions with a direct say in at least a part of their member states’ affairs). Not all theorists would include both aspects in their definition, and there are reasons why Haas, from his perspective, emphasised the social element of integration. However, as Niemann, Lefkofridi and Schmitter (forthcoming) demonstrate, functionally defined actors are core promoters of integration in neofunctionalism. A less demanding definition preferred by intergovernmentalists, coming from a different angle within the spectrum of integration theory, focuses instead more narrowly on the creation of political institutions to which member states subscribe. For an overview of integration theories as the present volume attempts to provide, insisting on coverage of both social and political integration would have been far too demanding and would have led to the exclusion of theoretical approaches otherwise seen as central to the debate. Therefore, while we have sympathies for Haas’ definition, we have

in the following included approaches that tackle at least the political integration process, while some of them go beyond this and deal with social integration as well.

While this may seem broad enough as a common denominator for most of traditional integration theory, it is nonetheless too restrictive to account for some of the later developments in what may broadly be seen as the field of integration theory. In both of the definitions above, integration is first and foremost a process: both neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists are more concerned with the process of integration than with the political system to which that integration leads. However, more recently various authors have focused specifically on the shape of what they call a new system of governance emerging in the EU. While they are more concerned with the outcome than the process of integration (see Marks et al. 1996a, 1996b; Hooghe/Marks 2009), their work is included in our understanding of integration theory, because it now undeniably forms an important part of that field, as the field has moved towards accepting the EU as a polity that needs to be understood better.

Secondly, what is theory? Again, understandings differ, and as above, we endorse a definition that allows us to include a broader range of approaches. Narrowly defined, theory is understood as a causal argument of universal, transhistorical validity and nomothetic quality, which can be tested through the falsification of a series of hypotheses (see e.g. King et al. 1994; Przeworski/Teune 1982). Despite the abstract nature of the broader understanding, it can nonetheless be context-specific, for instance by taking its point of departure in the consideration of a particular policy field of the EU. To make this point clearer, it helps to consider that theory serves different purposes. Some theoretical approaches explain policy outcomes or decision-making behavior, others criticize or “problematise” general trends on the basis of abstract considerations; some fit particular developments into a larger classificatory scheme, others seek to provide normative guidance (see e.g. Woods 1996). In each case, theory means something else: Different theoretical approaches to European integration are informed by different understandings of the meaning and purpose of theorizing.

To distinguish these different understandings from the narrow definition of theory outlined above, we will use the term “integration theory” when we mean the field of theorizing the process and outcome of (European) integration, while we use the term “theoretical approaches” when we refer to the individual ways of dealing with integration, some, but not all of which may be classified as theories in the narrow sense. What they all share, however, is that they are not solely concerned with the development of particular policies, but that they want to make a contribution to the reflection on European integration and governance.

European integration theory is thus the field of systematic reflection on the process of intensifying political cooperation in Europe and the development of common political institutions, as well as on its outcome. It also includes the theorization of changing constructions of identities and interests of social actors in the context of this process.



### 3. Why study Integration Theory?

For many students, the main purpose of studying integration will be to gain a better understanding of how the EU works. To do so, students require first and foremost knowledge about how these institutions are set up and how they work so as to identify organizational competences, the role and function of a particular institution according to the Treaties, or access points for lobbying activities. From this perspective, the value-added of theory is not immediately obvious — instead, empirical facts appear to provide sufficient information. Why then study integration theory? There are, at least, three reasons.

First, theories in the narrow sense of the term help us to explain processes and outcomes of integration, which not only leads to a better understanding of the current set of institutions, but may also help to formulate expectations about future developments and institutional behavior.

Second, apart from the set up, role, and function of formal institutions, many readers will, for example, be concerned with questions of democratic reform and legitimacy. On the one hand, these do require detailed knowledge about the EU's institutions. Yet, on the other hand, they also require a deeper understanding of the normative issues at stake, such as: What should legitimacy be based on? Or: What form of democracy is appropriate for a polity beyond the nation state? Many approaches that do not fit the narrow scientific definition of theory address such issues and assist and encourage further reflections upon them.

Third, and arguably more importantly, “pure” empirical knowledge of how institutions work is impossible and would in any case not be very meaningful. It is impossible since the representation of empirical facts is always based on particular concerns, and assumptions about the nature of the EU and the finality of the integration process, which often remain unreflected. Integration theory helps to highlight and problematize these concerns and assumptions. “Pure” empirical knowledge is not very meaningful in the sense that since any empirical representation is imbued with such assumptions, to concentrate only on the “facts” provides a superficial understanding that disregards at least some of the political disputes “underneath” the surface. To sum this point up, analyzing integration is not only a technical matter, but involves particular understandings and conceptualizations of integration and the EU, for which we need integration theory.

Two examples illustrate this point. The first one concerns the nature of foreign policy decision-making within the EU. To observers who base their assessment on the idiosyncratic organizational design, the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is by and large identified as a matter of the Council and therefore intergovernmentally organized. Not quite so, argue others (see e.g. Jørgensen 1997; Glarbo 2001; Øhrgaard 1997). While it is true that formally, CFSP is primarily a matter between governments and does not fall within the scope of the Commission, this characterisation misses some of the informal, “societal” developments that have created a dense web of consultation with integrative effects that are not captured by the intergovernmentalist picture. These take place on the “social” level through the creation of a ‘diplomatic community’ within the EU (Glarbo 2001; Adler-Nissen 2014), or the projection of normative power in international politics on the basis of common values and norms (Manners 2002; Sjørnsen 2006; Diez/Manners 2008; Manners/Whitman 2016), and they have political consequences, such as the so-called “co-ordination reflex”, the wide-spread tendency to co-ordinate foreign policy with other member states rather than going it alone (Puetter 2014). The extent to which this is true is a matter of empirical analysis,

but the important point is that these studies employ a particular theoretical approach that allows them to bring to the fore the social dimension of the integration process, even in areas formally characterised by intergovernmentalism (see also Risse forthcoming on social constructivism).

The second example concerns the development of citizenship in the EU. Here, formal institutional approaches would find that Union citizenship was “invented” at the intergovernmental conference that prepared the treaty revisions at Maastricht. As such, it is often seen as a “thin” institution with little substantive importance. Yet, some authors have pointed out that elements of (market-) citizenship, i.e. fundamental rights of working citizens, had been included in the treaties before, and that the way European citizenship emerged at Maastricht was in fact conditioned by previous legal cases, rulings, and provisions (O’Leary 1996; Kostakopoulou 2001; Kadelbach 2003; Shaw et al. 2011; Kochenov 2017). Others have pointed out that previous ‘citizenship practice’, i.e. the policies and political processes that forge the institutionalized terms of citizenship within a particular context, had constructed elements of citizenship ‘rights, access, and belonging’ that shaped the formulation of Union citizenship later on (Wiener 1998; see also Meehan 1993; Shaw 2007). The citizenship case demonstrates that the assessment of an institution’s meaning depends on the type of theoretical approach chosen to study the problem. Whether one regards the institutionalization of EU citizenship with the Maastricht Treaty as an important development will, for instance, depend on the theoretical assumptions about context, institutional role, and function, i.e. whether citizenship is approached from a normative, liberal or, indeed, dogmatic legal perspective. Furthermore, the process of integration raises questions about theoretical assumptions and contested concepts, for example, the question of whether such citizenship undermines the familiar concept of modern (national) citizenship. All of these are questions that are ultimately of a theoretical nature, and the theoretical vantage point one takes is crucial to how one answers them.

Reviewing the history of European integration demonstrates that there have been a number of occasions that are hotly debated in the integration literature, mostly due to analysts approaching them from different theoretical angles. The following is just a brief selection of controversies, some of which we will get back to in more detail later on:

- The role of state interests in the founding years: From a “realist” perspective in the IR sense of the term, integration and especially the developments in the founding years are largely down to the interests and power of big member states, during that phase particularly France and Germany, with France wanting to control Germany and Germany having an interest in getting back onto the international stage (see e.g. Bomberg/Peterson 1998). Against this, neofunctionalists have emphasized the role of private and sector interests (see Niemann et al. forthcoming), whereas political economy approaches put the spotlight onto the setting of integration within a broader context of capitalist hegemony (see van Apeldoorn/Horn forthcoming).
- The lack of major institutional developments in the 1970s: The 1970s are often labelled the ‘doldrum years’ of integration (and, as it were, integration theory), because political integration seemed to stagnate, whereas others have argued that ‘below the surface’ a lot of changes took place that would prepare for the ‘reinvigoration’ of integration and integration theory in the latter half of the 1980s (Caporaso/Keeler 1995). Furthermore, outside Political Science, legal scholars have advanced

the argument of ‘integration through law’, focusing on increasing legal interdependencies and corresponding shifts in the meaning of sovereignty (Cappelletti et al. 1985).

- The agreement on the Single European Act (1986): The agreement on institutional change introduced with the SEA raised a number of new questions for integration theory. Having been forged at an intergovernmental conference, it led to a re-launch of the theoretical debate discussing the role and formation of state preferences in the negotiations towards the SEA (Moravcsik 1991, 1993; see also Moravcsik/Schimmelfennig forthcoming), on the one hand, and emphasizing the role of the Commission, informal processes within the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), and the influence of private actors such as the European Round-Table of Industrialists, on the other (Wincott 1995; Hayes-Renshaw et al. 1992; Ross 1995; Bornschier 2000, see also van Apeldoorn/Horn forthcoming).

All of these controversies need to be investigated empirically, but they cannot be reduced to a simple testing of alternative hypothesis, nor can they be addressed purely by ‘thick description’ (Wallace 1996). Instead, seemingly competing theories often shed a different light on the issue that is enabled by a particular theoretical perspective.

#### 4. Integration Theory: A broad Overview

##### *Phases of European Integration Theory*

Having established the relevance of integration theory, we will in the following provide a first overview of its development. This places the theoretical approaches in their historical disciplinary context.

We suggest that the development of integration theory can be divided into three broad phases (compare Wiener 2006). These are preceded by a normative proto-integration theory period. We identify the three phases as explanatory, analytical, and constructive, respectively. A note of caution is in order, however. Since most approaches combine various dimensions of theory, the distinction among the respective phases is not as clear-cut as analytically suggested. The phases are therefore meant to identify the emergence, development, and, at times, dominance of particular theoretical tendencies, but we do not mean to suggest that these were the only (and sometimes not even the dominant) ones. In Table 1, we have left the endpoints of these phases open, since work in one tradition tends to continue after the emergence of new tendencies in theorizing. However, when we mention end dates in the following text, these are to signify a shift within European integration theory towards new approaches.

Similarly, although perhaps to a lesser extent, the dates provided for the beginnings of our three phases are also problematic. In 1970, Haas (1970: 635), for instance, had already conceptualised the then European Community as an ‘anarchoid image of a myriad of unity’ with significant ‘asymmetrical overlapping’ and ‘infinitely tiered multiple loyalties’, and Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) analyzed the EC as a ‘would-be polity’. Both of these works address issues characteristic of the phase of ‘Analysing Governance’ in European integration theory, which we will further develop below, yet they had been published at least a decade

before. We would nonetheless argue that our three phases identify the major tendencies in the development of European integration theory. They are also significant as the general self-image of the discipline, although not everyone would agree with our identification of a third phase in particular.

*Table 1: Three Phases in Integration Theory*

Phase	When?	Main themes	Main theoretical reference points
Explaining integration	1960s onwards	How can integration outcomes be explained? Why does European integration take place?	Liberalism, Realism, Neoliberalism
Analysing governance	1980s onwards	What kind of political system is the EU? How can the political processes within the EU be described? How does the EU's regulatory policy work?	Governance, Comparative Politics, Policy Analysis
Constructing the EU	1990s onwards	How and with which social and political consequences does integration develop?  How are integration and governance conceptualized? How should they be?	Social Constructivism, Poststructuralism,  International Political Economy  Normative Political Theory  Gender Approaches

Source: Authors.

The normative proto-integration period predates the actual development of political integration in Europe. It is an important pre-cursor of the three phases of integration theory building. Functionalism is typical of this normative period. As part of a broader set of early “liberal” approaches to IR, it saw states and their sovereignty as the core problem of a war-prone world. Popular in the inter-war years and in the immediate aftermath of World War II, with David Mitrany’s *A Working Peace System* (Mitrany 1943) as the core publication, it had a strong normative agenda, namely how, through a network of transnational organizations on a functional basis, one could constrain states and prevent future war. This was a global concern and had no direct relation to European integration — as a matter of fact, Mitrany was an opponent of regional integration that he saw as undermining his global concerns and replicating rather than transcending a state-model (Mitrany 1966; see Rosamond 2000: 36–38). Early federalism, too, can be located in this period. As a political movement, it was more directly related to particular developments in Europe, for example in the form

of calls for a European federation made during the inter-war years by actors as different as the German Social Democrats (see Schneider 1977; Hrbek 1972) and the conservative Hungarian Count Coudenhove-Kalergi (1971). Again, state sovereignty was a core problem for federalists only to be overcome by political organization at a higher level, although in contrast to Mitrany's functionalist model, this new political organization would bear many features of the state.

With the first phase, roughly lasting from the signing of the Treaty of Rome until the early 1980s, we enter European integration theory proper. Despite the realist attempts to integrate them into their worldview, and conceptualize integration as an effect of the power play between states, the early successes of integration challenged the existence of the territorial state system, which is at the core of realist assumptions. It therefore also challenged the overwhelming predominance of realism in IR after the disillusionment with liberal theories after the Second World War and its aftermath. Accordingly, integration theory initially sought to explain the processes of institution-building above the state, which was not supposed to happen within a realist picture of the world. Two theoretical approaches came to dominate the debate. Both were based on rational actor assumptions, while locating the push and pull for the integration process on different levels and in different societal realms.

Neofunctionalists, in line with their broad definition of integration, took up functionalist ideas and explained the move away from the anarchic state system and towards supranational institution-building by focusing on societal and market patterns and how they pushed élites towards advocating supranational institutions within their policy areas. Because of the functional interconnectedness of policy areas, these shared policy initiatives in so-called "low politics" areas were seen as having the potential for "spilling over" into other policy areas, at first to those closely related to market policy, but ultimately beyond (functional spill-over). This assumption the neofunctionalists shared with their predecessors. Yet they recognized that such spillovers were far from automatic, and so in addition to this, they expected actors, who had shifted their loyalties and redefined their identities, to actively demand further integration (political spill-over). In particular, actors responsible for governance on the supranational level (in the EU case, above all the European Commission) were considered to push (or "cultivate") integration because they had an interest in integration as such (cultivated spill-over). While sticking to the normative agenda of functionalism, neofunctionalists therefore paid greater tribute to the necessity of central political institutions. Chiming with the development of IR at the time, and the social sciences generally speaking, they also had an explicit social scientific (in contrast to a predominantly normative) interest in creating a general theory of regional integration that was applicable beyond the singular case of Europe (see in particular Ernst Haas's as well as Philippe Schmitter's work; Haas 1961, 1967, 1970; Haas/Schmitter 1964; and Niemann et al. forthcoming). In a different but not dissimilar way, Karl W. Deutsch (1957) saw integration coming about through the increased communication and interaction across borders, which gave his theoretical approach the name "transactionalism".

These arguments were opposed by intergovernmentalists who explained supranational institution-building as the result of bargains struck between nation states with specific geopolitical interests that militated towards a "pooling" of sovereignty in specific historical circumstances. In doing so, intergovernmentalists stuck to the core arguments of realism while still explaining aberrations from the realist worldview (Hoffmann 1966). The debate between supporters of integration as 'the rescue of the nation state' (Milward

1992), on the one hand, and as the overcoming of the nation state, on the other, which began in this first phase of integration theory, has remained a consistent factor in social science analysis to this day. While liberal intergovernmentalism, one of the core theoretical approaches since the late 1980s, does not deny the societal impact on supranational institution-building, as the theorisation of societal preference formation in Moravcsik's work demonstrates (see Moravcsik/Schimmelfennig forthcoming), their focus has been on governmental actors whose capacity for decisions were enhanced by supranational institutions, but not constrained by them. Institutions, according to this view, are designed for particular purposes and under control of the actors who created them. However, in line with the emerging consensus between neorealists and neoliberals in IR in the 1980s, Moravcsik combines "realist" state-centrism on the international level with a "liberal" focus on state preference formation, rather than referring to given geopolitical interests, and sees institutions beyond the nation-state as a standard feature of international politics, even though they are largely dependent on the continued support of their member states. To that extent, Moravcsik relates much more to the neoliberal than the realist "camp" in IR; after all, neoliberals, too, concede that the state is central to international politics and have therefore given up one of the core normative aims of "classical" liberalism as outlined above.

For a new generation of integration theorists, however, institutions were not mere tools in the hands of their creators, but had themselves an important impact on both the integration process and the development of European governance. As neoinstitutionalists have demonstrated, institutions can cause 'unintended consequences' (North 1990), making the process of institution-building less easily reversible than the intergovernmentalists would have it (Pierson 1996). A particularly dramatic example of unintended consequences was the largely underestimated push to further integration by the Single European Act (Weiler 1999). In terms of European integration theory, this led to the revival and revision of classic integration theories in the form of liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik 1991) and neofunctionalism (Stone Sweet 2002; Sandholtz/Zysman 1989; Tranholm-Mikkelsen 1991). It also marks the starting point for a shift of focus in theoretical approaches to European integration away from IR Theory towards Comparative Politics, not least out of a recognition that the EU's complex institutional set-up seemed to be here to stay. Meanwhile, even within IR, there emerged a greater recognition of different forms of institutionalised cooperation in international politics, first in the form of "regime theory", then in the theorization of what Czempel and Rosenau (1992) aptly called 'governance without government'.

This second phase considerably broadened the scope of empirical research and theoretical reflection on European integration, and introduced a greater degree of interdisciplinarity. It brought comparative and institutionalist approaches to the foreground of integration theory, following questions of what kind of polity the EU really is and how it operates—as Thomas Risse-Kappen (1996) famously put it, to 'explore the nature of the beast'. Among the concepts developed during this phase to answer these questions are the EU as a system of 'multi-level' (Marks et al. 1996a) or 'network governance' (Jachtenfuchs/Kohler-Koch 1996), or as a 'multi-perspectival polity' (Ruggie 1993). Others focused on the way in which policies are made through the analysis of policy networks (Peterson 1995; Peterson/Bomberg 1999). A key process analyzed was the 'Europeanisation' of governance rules, institutions, and practices across the EU (Cowles et al. 2001). Questions of institutional adaptation and "misfit" and of "good governance" including legitimacy, democracy, and transparency are other issues addressed by works in this second phase of integration theories. They clearly reflected the shifting agendas of both IR and Comparative Politics in an era in which

governance structures, it seemed, could no longer be contained within the nation state and therefore called for an analysis that integrated both fields.

To some extent, the third phase of integration theory is marked by the return of IR Theory, although of a different kind. During the 1980s and 1990s, IR Theory was characterised by the rise of a variety of critical and constructivist approaches, which drew their inspiration from developments in other fields of social theory. Scholars questioned both the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which traditional approaches had been built. Social constructivists, for instance, demonstrated the relevance of ideas, norms, institutions, and identities for international politics and pointed to the interdependence of the structure of the state system, on the one hand, and the agency of those involved in international politics, on the other. Post-structuralists problematized core concepts of IR Theory and drew attention to the discursive construction of our understanding of international politics. Critical Theorists and feminists not only developed important critiques of the contemporary international system, but also often offered alternative paths towards what they saw as a more just world (see Abels/MacRae 2016). In the field of Political Economy, too, scholars took on a more critical outlook and increasingly referred to the problems brought about by the hegemony of capitalism as a particular political-economic system (see Jones/Verdun 2005).

These developments coincided with the move towards political union in the 1991 Maastricht and the 1996 Amsterdam Treaties. Under the pressure of massive enlargement and constitutional revision, integration theory faced the challenge of analyzing and problematizing the interrelated processes of widening and deepening. Different from the first two phases, which sought to explain or analyze either institution-building on the supranational level, or institutional change on the meso- and sub-state levels, this third phase of integration theory thus faced the more encompassing task of theorizing the goal or finality of European integration, the competing ideas and discourses about European governance, and the normative implications of particular EU policies. Accordingly, apart from problem-oriented theorizing, works during this phase have been concerned with questions about our understanding of integration, how particular policy areas have been defined and developed in the way they did, and what political effects these definitions and historical processes have had.

This third phase therefore focuses on substantial questions about “constructing” (and limiting) European integration. It is in answering these questions that the critical and constructivist approaches in IR Theory were taken up,<sup>4</sup> alongside or combined with insights from the ‘constitutional turn’ later in the second phase, which, sparked by the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and the increased public debate about the legitimacy of European governance, brought normative questions about the EU’s constitution from Political Theory to the heart of the analysis of governance (see Bickerton et al. 2015; as well as Bellamy/Lacey forthcoming, as well as Börzel forthcoming). Social constructivism, especially, has in some respects drawn on, and in turn contributed to insights of governance approaches. In particular, it has addressed issues

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4 There have of course been critical approaches to European integration all along. See for example, International Political Economy approaches, informed by Marxism and Post-Marxism (e.g. Deppe 1976; Holland 1980), posed themselves as alternatives to the mainstream in the 1970s and 1980s, but they were always confined to a few niches, and did not gain as much popularity as the more recent approaches covered here, although there has over the past decade or so been a resurgence of related approaches in the form of what one could call the ‘Amsterdam School’ (compare e.g. van Apeldoorn/Horn forthcoming).



of the development of the EU's formal and informal institutions, as well as processes of Europeanisation, although as far as the latter are concerned, its focus has been on the Europeanisation of identities rather than institutions and policies (see Risse forthcoming).

## 5. Approaches covered in this Book

The theoretical approaches discussed in this book cover the three phases of integration theory, including their normative pre-cursor. We have therefore divided the book into three corresponding parts, "Explaining European Integration", "Analysing European Governance", and "Constructing the European Union".

Part I Explaining European Integration, contains firstly a chapter on federalism. While federalism is first and foremost a normative theory, it has been used more recently in a comparative fashion to explain, analyze, or devise particular features of the Euro-polity (Koslowski 2001; Nicolaidis/Howse 2001). Furthermore, scholars such as Moravcsik (1998) have derived hypotheses about the particular institutional choices made in intergovernmental conferences for European governance from federalism (see also Moravcsik/Schimmelfennig forthcoming). Together with neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, federalism can be seen as a triad of theories that are often, although problematically so, as we will argue below, presented as competing with each other (see Kelemen forthcoming). Accordingly, chapter 3 is devoted to neofunctionalism and chapter 4 to intergovernmentalism, both of which take IR theories as a starting point to attempt an explanation of why integration takes place, and why policy-makers choose particular policies and institutional arrangements.

In Part II Analysing European Governance, we turn our focus to those approaches that first and foremost try to understand and analyze the EU as a type of political system. Chapter 5 reflects on the development of governance approaches. It explicitly links the study of European integration to broader debates and analytical frameworks in Political Science, focusing more on the analysis of policy-making processes and drawing on a different set of Political Science, at the core of which is the explanation of particular policy-decisions with the configuration of the respective policy-field. While such an approach often produces very detailed empirical studies, it is nonetheless a theoretical approach in that it advances general arguments about the nature of the policy-making process and its outputs within a complex governance setting. Chapter 6 looks at the contribution that 'new institutionalisms' have made to the study of European governance, analyzing in particular the impact of institutions on policy-making and the overall development of governance, as well as the shaping of those institutions by political actors. The focus in this chapter is on rationalist and historical institutionalism, whereas sociological institutionalism is discussed as part of social constructivism in chapter 7. The chapter therefore acts as a kind of "bridge" to chapter 7. Social constructivists are interested in what kind of "beast" the EU is (Risse-Kappen 1996) and how political processes and identities change within the integration process. They link to the approaches in Part III in that they stress the constructed characteristic of European integration and governance and the interplay of structure and agency in this construction. Yet they also link to the approaches covered in Part I in that they try to explain this construction, highlighting the role of ideas and norms together with interests, rather than focusing predominantly on the latter, as neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists tend to do. Social constructivists also share



with most approaches in both Part I and III a strong affiliation with IR: while social constructivism by no means originated there, it found its way into the study of European integration via the work that developed in IR since the late 1980s.

Finally, Part III Constructing the European Union deals with those more recent approaches that add a critical dimension to studying the European Union. This part includes in Chapter 8 firstly, a discussion of discursive approaches to the analysis of European integration, some of which have used post-structuralist concepts taken mostly from IR Theory to problematize conceptions of European integration and governance, while others have tried to use those concepts to develop an explanatory framework for the analysis of the European policies of member states, drawing on the constraints that predominant discourses set for the formulation of EU policy. Gender approaches, which are covered in chapter 9, share the critical and problematizing line with discursive approaches, building in part on the advances of feminist approaches in other disciplines and focusing on how European integration and EU policies build on and (re)produce a particular image of “women” and “men”, implicitly or even explicitly favoring one over the other. In their critical and problematizing mode, both chapters 8 and 9 tackle some of the core normative problems of European integration and EU governance as it has developed over the decades, including above all the notion of a crisis of legitimacy of supranational governance. These issues relate to the broader questions posed by Political Theory as a subfield of Political Science, and so it is little surprise that Political Theorists have increasingly found interest in the EU. Chapter 10 covers the input from this field to European Integration Theory. As a final contribution before our conclusion, Chapter 11 provides an overview of Political Economy approaches to the study of European integration and governance. Again, these have increasingly focused on critical interrogations of the integration process and its consequences, but instead of tackling predominantly conceptual issues as discursive approaches do, their main arguments relate to the capitalist system as it is embedded in the current configuration of the Single Market and Economic and Monetary Union. Chapter 12 provides a lessons-learned perspective that takes account of and critically appraises the interrelation between European integration and Regional integration theories (see Börzel/Risse forthcoming). And Chapter 13 concludes by taking-stock of the mosaic’s promises over the past decade and a half (see Wiener forthcoming).

The list of approaches covered in this book is obviously not exhaustive of all the approaches available to the student of European integration. We have included what we believe are the currently most salient and influential approaches in European integration theory, and by including some of the more recent developments, we will have already expanded the scope of what is conventionally taught as the core of the discipline. Nonetheless some of the omissions may prove more controversial than others. Two require particular justification.

Firstly, we have not included a chapter on transactionalism. While we agree with those who would like to see this approach given much more attention than it currently receives, because it would refocus our attention to the social, rather than the political integration process, we cannot ignore that, a few exceptions aside, hardly anyone has followed the lead of Karl Deutsch in this respect. In addition to this, Deutsch’s focus was on NATO and the transatlantic ‘security community’, rather than on European integration per se (but see Deutsch et al. 1967). It is telling that one of the few recent pieces that comes close to transactionalism subsumes Deutsch’s work under neofunctionalism, and focuses on transnational exchange as one

of the independent variables influencing the form of supranational organization, rather than on different forms of community as a result of communication across borders (Stone Sweet/Sandholtz 1997).

A second omission in this book is that of “pure” economic theories of integration. In this respect, we do not believe that there can be a purely economic theory of European integration as defined above, which is above all a political and social process. To the extent that economic theories exist in this field, they are looking at particular aspects and especially the effects of economic integration, and are thus not theories of European integration as such (see Balassa 1962; El-Agraa 1982). Economic theories have, however, found their way into some of the approaches covered, such as liberal intergovernmentalism, where predictions about the outcome of domestic bargains over national interests are made on the basis of economic theorems, or political economy, which however criticises the division of economics from the other social sciences, and they are therefore discussed within these contexts. But we do not think that an economic theory as such is currently playing a major part in the integration theory debates, nor are we convinced that it should be.

Last but not least, the approaches included in this book have in their majority (but by no means all) been formulated by scholars working in English, and within the Anglo-Saxon scholarly community. This is a problem to the extent that we are thereby imposing a narrative of the development of European integration theory on scientific communities that may have had a very different experience, and we may have overlooked important and exciting theoretical developments in that process—European integration theory outside the Anglo-Saxon boundaries may indeed be ‘the best kept secret’ (Jørgensen 2000 for International Relations Theory; see also Friedrichs 2004). Having said that, the success of approaches beyond national boundaries requires its formulation in what is increasingly becoming the lingua franca of academia. This is not to say that there are no interesting developments outside what is accessible in English. It is also true that there are particular academic styles that differ between national academic communities, and that translating from another language into English does not always properly convey the meaning of the original. But as an overview and a stock-taking exercise, we had to base our selection on what we regarded as success across borders, and English-speaking publications remain in many ways the yardstick for such an exercise, even if this is problematic.

## 6. Studying Integration Theory

### *6.1 Contexts of theoretical Development*

The story of integration theory can be told from a chronological angle or with a focus on theoretical debates and the specific issues covered. Our account combines a chronological perspective with a perspective on debates because there are distinct themes and controversies to particular phases of European integration theory. Telling the story of integration theory in these terms is not uncommon (compare for example the overviews by Caporaso/Keeler 1995; Bache/George 2001; Rosamond 2000; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2006). More contested is the question of how the theoretical approaches relate to each other. There are two aspects to this issue. The first relates to the emergence of theories and the movement from one dominant

approach to another, and can therefore be seen as a contribution to the history and sociology of European integration studies. The second is concerned with the 'fit' of theories (above all whether they are compatible or competing with each other), and is therefore a contribution to theory-building in itself.

Starting with the historical-sociological approach, there are two factors that are often seen as influencing the development of theories, the academic and the socio-political context (Rosamond 2000: 9). The academic context consists of debates and problems that are pursued in the wider scientific context of a particular field as well as the legacies of previous debates in the field itself. Of particular importance in this context are particular 'paradigms' that provide researchers with guideposts about how to conduct and present their studies (see Kuhn 1964). The socio-political context, in contrast, consists of factors outside of academia, such as the development of the object under analysis, the influence of sponsors on research agendas, or the discursive restrictions set by a particular political climate. In addition, both of these contexts can be coloured by national differences.

Our account of the three phases of European integration theory above provides plenty of examples for how the study of European integration has followed the ups and downs of its subject. The rise, fall, and comeback of neofunctionalism in the 1950s, following the Empty Chair crisis and the Single European Act respectively, provide the most obvious case. The relation between the socio-political context and the development of theory is, however, not a one-way street. Thus, not only was neofunctionalism developed on the basis of what happened in Western Europe in the 1950s, neofunctionalism itself also became the quasi-official ideology in the Commission and other parts of the EC institutions. Ironically, as Bache and George (2001: 15) point out, it is today often used by so-called Eurosceptics to increase fears of a technocratic, centralized, and undemocratic super-state, whereas governments supportive of further integration tend to resort to the intergovernmentalist rhetoric of sovereignty being only 'pooled' in order to alleviate these fears.

While the influence of the EU's development on integration theory may be obvious, the academic context has been no less forceful in shaping the way in which integration has been conceptualised and analysed. As Rosamond (1995: 394) argues, theoretical approaches to the analysis of European integration 'have arisen in the context of dominant perspectives in the broad arena of social scientific inquiry' and are 'bound up with intellectual fashion and debates between and within different theoretical paradigms'. Thus, if we had included a list of major works in other social sciences and neighbouring fields in this paper, we would have seen that theoretical movements in European integration studies are often preceded by or run in parallel with developments in disciplines such as Political Science, Legal Studies, and IR in particular, as our overview has demonstrated. Neofunctionalism provides yet again a good example with its social-scientific turn against earlier versions of functionalism (see Caporaso/Keeler 1995: 32–4; Kelstrup 1998: 24).

European integration also became an instrument for the pursuit of academic controversies in that it served as ammunition for the critique of the dominant, state-centred realist paradigm (Bache/George 2001: 19); and again this mirrors debates in IR and Political Science more widely. Thereby, the neofunctionalism versus intergovernmentalism debate became embedded in a discourse in which the model of the state remained at the core, either on the national or on the European level (see Rosamond 1995), which in turn hindered the development of a debate about legitimacy 'beyond the state' (Kelstrup/Williams 2000: 8). That such a

debate eventually became possible is not only due to the acceptance of the EU as a polity discussed above (see Hix 1994: 10), but also to the development of normative, critical, and constructivist approaches in other social sciences that could be imported into the third phase of European integration theory (Kelstrup/Williams 2000: 1, 9). Similarly, the comparativist project of the second phase benefited greatly from the previous development of neoinstitutionalist research in sociology, which provided comparativists with new concepts to analyse political institutions as an important influence on politics in their own right.

Interestingly, it is the academic context where national differences seem to matter most, rather than the socio-political context, and the problem of language discussed earlier plays a crucial part in this. It is perhaps ironic that most of the classic integration theories have been developed in the United States, rather than within Europe. This, however, can be explained by the dominance of theory-driven American Social Science in International Relations (see Wæver 1998a), from which the approaches in the crucial first phase of integration theory developed. “European” approaches have traditionally tended to be much more historically or normatively oriented, or have been engaged in detailed empirical studies of particular policies (Smith/Ray 1993). Only with the advent of the second and the third phase of integration theory are there more clearly audible European voices—most of them advocating a form of social inquiry that is different from the American social science model. Among these voices, there is also a certain degree of differentiation along national or regional lines, although whether this is more than coincidental would require further analysis. To give but two examples, discursive studies of the EU have by and large emerged from a Scandinavian context (e.g. Hansen/Wæver 2002; Larsen 1997a, 1997b; Neumann 1999; Wæver 1998b), whereas two major studies on ideas and European governance have originated in Germany (Jachtenfuchs et al. 1998; Marcussen et al. 2001). Further research would have to be done to substantiate these initial findings, but they are striking enough to suggest that particular approaches often have a regional “centre”.

## *6.2 Competing or complementary Approaches?*

The importance of socio-political and academic contexts for the development of integration theory raises fundamental questions about the relationship of individual approaches to each other. Does the discussion in the last section imply that instead of moving to one unified theory, these approaches offer different perspectives that are largely determined by the contexts in which they are developed? Are these perspectives mutually exclusive, and can the arguments they put forward be tested against each other? How, in short, is one to compare the different theoretical approaches?

At the extremes of this debate are, on the one hand, the notion of scientific progress, where through falsification our knowledge of integration advances, and, on the other hand, the notion of incommensurable paradigms, which, in effect, construct and talk about different realities, and between which a dialogue is hardly possible. If we take the different understandings of theory advanced above, the more scientifically minded will generally tend towards the former, those with a broader understanding of theory towards the latter pole. Consequently, Moravcsik (1998) for instance, in his major contribution to the development of European integration theory, tests different theories against each other in order to establish a (liberal-intergovernmentalist) ground on which future theory can build. His exchange with Diez as well as with Risse

and Wiener on the value of this contribution, however, can serve as an example for talking past each other because of very different agendas, concepts, and definitions that emerge from very different contexts (see Diez 1999; Moravcsik 1999c, 2001b; Risse/Wiener 2001).

While we agree that scientific progress is ultimately influenced by its academic and socio-political context, we nonetheless find the argument of incommensurability problematic. Most integration theories have been developed within the context of Western academia, and although their pedigree differs, and consequently their ontological and epistemological foundations, they share quite a lot of common ground to the extent that they are incompatible, this is a consequence not of their inherent incommensurability, but of the claims they make about their scope. In other words, many theorists make broader claims such as “explaining integration”, when what they really do is a much more limited enterprise, for instance explaining results of intergovernmental conferences, criticizing a particular conceptualization of integration, or seeking to understand the historical development of a particular aspect of integration. This problem, as well as the criticism of it, is not new. Puchala already remarked in 1972 that ‘different schools of researchers have exalted different parts of the integration “elephant”. They have claimed either that their parts were in fact whole beasts, or that their parts were the most important ones, the others being of marginal interest’ (Puchala 1972: 268).

Inappropriate scope claims take an ontological and an epistemological form. Ontologically, approaches often explicitly or implicitly claim to provide a theoretical approach to (European) integration as such, while they in fact focus on a particular process or outcome. If this claim is relaxed, it should be possible to combine different approaches depending on the subject of analysis. Epistemologically, approaches would only be incommensurable if they claimed to have the same purpose and if they were directly related to reality. If, however, we assume that approaches can have different purposes, and if, perhaps more controversially, we further assume that our understanding of reality is always mediated by particular discursive contexts, which seems particularly opportune in the face of the ‘multi-perspectival’ character of the European Union (Ruggie 1993), then it is possible to see different approaches adding to a larger picture without being combined into a single, grand theory.

Even if two approaches agree on the aim of explaining integration, for instance, they might still be difficult to compare if what they mean by integration (ontological scope claim) are two different things. Moravcsik, for instance, focuses on political integration and the role of intergovernmental bargains, whereas neo-functionalists such as Stone Sweet and Sandholtz (1997) see integration as a much more social process happening in part through what they call ‘transnational exchange’ between member states societies (see also Branch/Øhrgaard 1999; on liberal intergovernmentalism see also Rosamond 1995: 398). All of these are respectable accomplishments in their own rights, and hardly testable against each other (see also Hix 1994: 3). Yet, at the same time, this does not necessarily make them incommensurable once there is a certain modesty introduced regarding the scope of the argument made.

The approaches in this book therefore can be seen as providing different perspectives on the subject of integration, each contributing to our overall understanding of the subject. They cannot easily be lumped together to form a grand theory of integration because one needs to adopt one’s own viewpoint in order to ‘make them work’, and we therefore differ in this respect from the project of developing an overarching

framework as it was eventually pursued even by Puchala (1972). However, they are not always direct competitors either, although some of them will indeed formulate hypotheses that can be tested against each other. Instead, one might see them as stones in an always-incomplete mosaic. The picture of integration that emerges from them is a multi-faceted one — a point we will have to revisit in the conclusion to this volume, together with some of the questions this raises about the advancement and value of theory.

For now, it is important to develop an understanding of the main dimensions along which these approaches differ. We consider two such dimensions as particularly important. One is about the functions of theory briefly referred to above; the other is about the areas that the approaches analyze.

### *6.3 The Functions of Theory*

There are three main functions of theory (broadly understood), and these run roughly parallel to the three main phases of integration theory identified above.

1. Theory as explanation or understanding. Although explaining and understanding approaches differ widely in the epistemological claims they make, and consequently in the methodologies they apply (see Hollis/Smith 1990), they share a common purpose in the sense that they ask why (explaining) or how (understanding) an event has come about. To that extent, they ask for reasons and/or causes for something to happen (on reasons and causes, see the discussion in Wendt 1999 and Smith 2000). They differ predominantly in relation to the degree to which they consider their arguments generalizable or dependent on specific contexts, warranting different methodologies. The approaches in the first phase of integration theory have asked these sorts of questions, and most of them have leaned towards the “explanation” variant. More recent approaches such as Social Constructivism have sometimes asked similar questions, and while most Social Constructivists would see themselves in the “understanding business”, at least some of them have leaned towards “explaining”.

2. Theory as description and analysis. This might at first seem like a waste-bin category, but it is not. Approaches in this category focus on the development of definitions and concepts with which to grasp particular developments, practices, and institutions. They provide labels and classifications. In that sense, explaining and understanding approaches have to presuppose descriptive and analytical approaches because the latter provide the former with the concepts on the basis of which events can be explained or understood. Likewise, an ‘underlying theory’ is an important part of any classificatory exercise (Mirkin 1996: 23). In the second phase of integration theory, we would expect a focus on description and analysis because one of the aims of these approaches was to provide a vocabulary with which to capture ‘the nature of the beast’ (Risse-Kappen 1996), to “classify” the EU as a polity and to understand its main features and processes.

3. Theory as critique and normative intervention. While approaches in the first two categories take the development of integration more or less as a given, other approaches question the route that the integration process, or a particular policy, has taken, or develop norms and principles for the future

of integration. Approaches in this category therefore either problematize a given development, or they develop normative alternatives. Theory in this understanding is often much closer to what one might call philosophy, or perhaps only “abstract reflection”, but in the form of normative theory, it has always had its rightful place in the canon of Political Theory, and many critical theories have recently been added to this (Tully 2002, 2008a, b). At least some of the approaches included in our third phase of integration theory fall into this category (see Galligan forthcoming; Bellamy/Lacey forthcoming and Apeldoorn/Horn forthcoming).

If theory has such different purposes, it would be unfair and not even valid to hold one approach accountable on the basis of criteria set by another one. Evaluating and weighing theoretical approaches against each other therefore always has to take account of the principal function or purpose that the approach assigns to itself, unless we want to impose one common purpose on all theoretical approaches.

#### 6.4 *The Areas of Theory*

It is, however, not only the purpose of theory that varies, but also the area, or the “object” of particular approaches. Analyzing member states’ integration policy is different from, although related to, reflecting on the best institutional set-up for the EU, and consequently may require a different methodology. These areas of theory are a second, independent dimension on which theoretical approaches can differ from each other. Again, we propose three different areas, which we have delineated along the triad of polity, policy, and politics.

1. Theory dealing with polity. “Polity” refers to the political community and its institutions. Approaches falling into this category would be those analyzing the “nature of the beast”, those explaining how the EU’s institutional structure came about, or those trying to find constitutional alternatives on the basis of normative considerations, to give examples taken from all three functions of theory.

2. Theory dealing with policy. “Policy” includes the actual measures taken to tackle concrete problems, and theoretical approaches in this area analyze and compare their content, or critically reflect upon them. This includes aspects such as ‘policy style, the general problem-solving approach, the policy instruments used, and the policy standards set’ (Börzel/Risse 2000: 3). However, to qualify as theory according to our definition above, such analyses need to be brought onto an abstract level, for instance by drawing out general patterns of policy content, or reflecting on the normative underpinnings within a policy field

3. Theory dealing with politics. “Politics” comprises the process of policy-making and the daily struggles and strategies of political actors dealing with each other. It is about the bargaining between governments, the influence of particular interest groups, or the dominance of a specific style of how decisions are reached. Approaches concerned with politics look at such issues as why technocratic governance prevails over participatory governance, how interest groups try to influence the policy-making process, or how particular groups are systematically disadvantaged by the dominant political style (see Hix/Høyland 2011).

As these definitions have illustrated, it would be rather difficult empirically to stick strictly to one of these areas. Any discussion of polity is likely to involve constitutional frames in which policy-making takes place,



or which restrict the content of policy, as well as the implication of constitutional arrangements for politics. Nonetheless, approaches are likely to emphasize one or the other, and not deal with all three poles of the triad in equal measure. Moreover, to the extent that they want to explain, they will use polity, policy, and politics either as the explanandum (what is to be explained) or the explanans (the explaining factor). However, a theoretical approach such as neofunctionalism might aim at explaining integration outcomes (here polity), while focusing on their explanation (here politics). Therefore, one has to specify how the areas of theory figure within each approach.

## 7. The Mosaic of Integration Theory

Combining these two dimensions, we arrive at what we call the mosaic of integration theory. Keeping the caveats raised above in mind, theoretical approaches can be located in the nine cells of Table 2. Its character as a “mosaic” comes from the fact that each approach can be seen as a stone that adds to the picture that we gain of the EU. This picture is likely to remain unfinished, as new approaches will add new stones to change the picture. To reiterate, our point is that rather than directly competing with each other, each approach contributes to the emerging picture in its own limited way. The contributions can be ambiguous—as is the EU itself in many ways. But they are not necessarily mutually exclusive and incommensurable, as is often assumed. Placing an approach in a particular part of the mosaic therefore clarifies with which approaches it actually competes in a rather narrow field.

Even if this is the case, however, any two approaches may still not be directly testable against each other. The example of liberal intergovernmentalism v. neofunctionalism illustrates this. In this case, while both approaches want to explain the political process of reaching a decision, and to some extent the outcome of that process in terms of its effects on the polity, they analyze different aspects of the decision-making process because they start from a different definition of integration. The distinction of various analytical areas is therefore a rather general one that always needs to be supplemented by a closer look at the basic concepts and definitions that approaches use within their area. This is not only true for the area- but also for the function-dimension. Because we have lumped together “explaining” and “understanding”, “analytical” and “descriptive”, “critical” and “normative”, approaches even within one cell are not necessarily directly comparable, as the epistemological claims they make differ widely, and thus the scope of their argument.

*Table 2: The Functions and Areas of (Integration) Theory*

	POLITY	POLICY	POLITICS
EXPLANATORY/UNDERSTANDING			
ANALYTICAL/DESCRIPTIVE			
CRITICAL/NORMATIVE			

Source: Authors.

As we have pointed out above, approaches will usually find themselves in more than one category. The



mosaic should not be seen as an exercise in compartmentalisation. Quite to the opposite, it is a heuristic device that allows us to move beyond fruitless debates in which approaches operating in different areas and pursuing different purposes talk past each other. Besides, even though approaches will cross the imaginary boundaries of the identified fields, they will tend to focus on one or the other—life is too short, and book space too restricted to deal with everything.

## **8. Reviewing Integration Theory**

### *8.1 The Structure of the Chapters*

Although the structure of individual chapters varies, they all address a set of questions that will help in the comparison between theoretical approaches and the assessment of their compatibility or incommensurability. Each author was asked to summarize the origins of the approach covered, its main arguments, and development over time. As the majority of the authors were substantially involved in the development of “their” approach, these sections are to be seen not only as an introduction, but also as a reflection on the current state-of-the-art of each approach in relation to earlier work. Chapters also include an overview of the main debates surrounding approaches, including the criticism raised from the perspective of other approaches, the main current questions facing authors, and potential ways forwards.

However, in order to come to a consistent and reflected comparison of the approaches, we have asked authors to include a section in which they provide an example of a specific puzzle that they think “their” approach is particularly apt to address, and which in the past has been a focus of many works written in this tradition. If our argument about European integration theory as a mosaic holds, we expect approaches to differ with regard to their choice of crisis and the area that they focus upon. We have asked authors to include sections in which they recall and summarize the central conceptual advances of their respective theoretical approach to European integration theory, undertake critical reflection with regard to their respective approach, and point out or speculate about follow-up work written from their approach would address the issue of ‘crisis’. We asked all contributions to choose a focus on either one or more types of crises that matter particular for current European integration, including especially the security crisis, the refugee crisis and the financial crisis. Given their distinct standpoint within the context of the mosaic, we expect authors to ask different types of questions about ‘crisis’ thereby illustrating the different functions of theory.

On the basis of these sections where authors provide examples of how their approaches deal with concrete issues, we will return in the conclusion to the questions raised in this introduction, but we also invite readers to make their own comparisons when reading this book, and to use these sections as a starting point for critical reflections on the past or ongoing debates summarized in each chapter, and thereby pushing European integration theory forward.

## *8.2 Past, Present, and Future*

“Past, present, and future” provides an organizing theme for this book in a double sense. Firstly, each chapter, by reflecting on the origins and development of each approach, on the main puzzles addressed and state-of-the art, and on the current challenges and ways forward, addresses the past, present, and future of each approach. Secondly, the three parts of this volume reflecting the three phases of European integration theory can be seen as an expression of “past, present, and future”: “past” in the sense of a set of approaches that have been with us since the early days of integration theory, have been developed to a considerable degree, and have influenced subsequent generations of integration scholars; “present” in the sense that a lot of theoretical work today has shifted towards questions of governance that combine International Relations and Comparative Politics; and “future” in the sense that a set of novel approaches raises a number of issues which, although unlikely to dominate theoretical development in the future, will have to be taken into account, as they are now taken into account in other Social Sciences.

We have already made clear that we do not wish to reinforce some of the fault(y) lines along which the field of European integration theory was divided in the past. Instead, we see in the present a healthy trend towards a proliferation of approaches that contribute to an ever more faceted and nuanced picture of the European Union, its history and its development. What we would like to see in the future is neither the development of one single grand theory, nor the isolation and non-communication between approaches. The following chapters should help to clarify from where each approach comes, and the scope of its argument, so that a critical but constructive and open debate can thrive.

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